

## **Gardening Projects**

**By Kathleen Cue, Nebraska Extension Horticulture Educator in Dodge County**

Week of February 17, 2020

What really sets Nebraska Extension Master Gardeners apart from garden clubs is their dedication to learning Best Management Practices, the cornerstone of what the land grant university has to offer, whether it is an invasive insect, a tough weed to manage, or a proven plant variety to try. This dedication to learning shows in the enthusiasm Master Gardeners share with Nebraskans through direct education (the helpline and tabling events), growing food for the food insecure, and managing education gardens.

Plant a Row for the Hungry began in 1995 by the Garden Writers Association. This program and other programs like it encourage gardeners to grow an extra row of vegetables and donate them to local soup kitchens and food pantries. While nonperishables are the backbone of donations to food pantries, fresh vegetables and fruits can be in short supply. It doesn't take much extra effort and Individual gardeners or groups can participate. For possible locations of fruit and vegetable donations, contact your local Extension Office. A really heartwarming story involves a community garden that collected all the leftover seedlings and seed packets from their gardeners, planting them in the neglected place between the sidewalk and street. The abundance of produce that came from this out-of-the-way spot were donated next door, to the low-income seniors. It was a boon to both the gardeners and the seniors because the senior citizens got fresh vegetables and the gardeners had the careful eye of the retirees keeping watch over their garden!

The Nebraska Certified Pollinator Habitat program sets criteria for residential gardens, municipal landscapes, school gardens, and businesses to have their spaces certified as pollinator friendly. The plight of honey bees and monarch butterflies is well-known but the unsung heroes, native bees, are virtually unknown. This is sad because they are real workhorses—just 250 native bees do the pollination work of 30,000 honey bees. A diversity of flowering plants, a water source, and places of shelter are what's needed to help native bees and other pollinators. More information and an application may be found at: <http://go.unl.edu/pollinatorhabitat>.

“Prune when the saw is sharp” is an old adage whose time has passed. New research indicates trees and shrubs are best pruned in April, May or June, months that show the best turnaround time for wound closure. Why is it important for wounds to close on a timely basis you ask? The longer it takes for trees and shrubs to form callus tissue over wounds means the likelihood from fungal and bacterial infections increases. Oak and elm are the exception to pruning in April, May or June because certain insect-vectored diseases are prevalent then. Oak and elm are pruned during the dormant season, November through February, when freezing weather means insects are not active.